

AUSTIN BEUTNER UPDATE TO THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY – JULY 6, 2020

Good morning. I'm Austin Beutner, Superintendent of Los Angeles Unified.

Today our focus will be on a Summer of Learning. While a record number of students are attending summer school, this is also a time for educators to reflect on what's been learned since school facilities closed in March. These learnings are helping to inform the planning and the expectations for the upcoming school year, which begins in August. No decision has been made about a return to school facilities but it's reasonable to assume instruction will include an online component for most students.

When school facilities closed and classes continued online, we knew we were entering uncharted waters. The education equivalent of a moonshot.

Many students did not have devices at home and lacked internet access. Training was needed for students and their families on how to use these tools as well as the many different communication and education technologies that are part of an online education.

Teachers were asked to adapt lesson plans based on classroom instruction, virtually overnight, to somehow complete the last few months of school online. Educators also needed training in the tools and technologies, as well as different approaches to online instruction.

Support staff had to be trained and integrated into online classrooms.

The safety net schools provide including food and mental health support had to be rebuilt so it could continue even when school facilities were closed.

And everyone in the school community – students, staff and families – would need to handle these challenges while dealing with the impact the virus was having in their own lives.

Perfection was not possible but our pledge was to do the best possible. I am grateful for everyone in Los Angeles Unified who worked tirelessly to achieve that goal. There is no school district in the nation of this size and complexity that has accomplished as much.

Los Angeles Unified has provided more meals than any other school-based relief effort in the country. A mental health hotline is available to students and families.

Schools provided a computer or tablet and internet access to every student who needed it. Almost every student remained a part of their school community.

An effort together with PBS created student-centered, instructional programming that is watched by more than 200,000 people each day in the Los Angeles area. The same shows are being used by school districts and PBS affiliates in more than 30 other states.

Training was provided to students, families and educators. 35,000 educators received training in the basics and 14,000 are finishing additional training to become masters in online instruction.

Every school held regular meetings with families, and town halls were held in 40 communities we serve.

And a record number of students are participating in summer school, studying the fundamentals in literacy and math and exploring a wide variety of additional learning opportunities.

As we look ahead to the start of a new school year, the challenge is to build on the foundation that's been put in place over the past few months. And apply the learnings to provide the best possible education for students.

The new school year will begin with a clear and consistent set of expectations for the classroom. These include a regular class schedule, attendance taken every day, standards-based instruction including daily, live instruction and regular assessment of student progress.

We know the importance of daily, live instruction yet about 1/3 of teachers were not able to provide this owing to a variety of factors. Training and support is available to students, teachers and families to help make sure all classes can participate. This direct engagement with students will be important as teachers and students build relationships at the start of a new school year.

Schools will continue to make sure every student has a device and internet access. This will include helping new students and providing repairs and replacements for existing students. A team is working to simplify the use of the many different technologies educators were using last year and better integrate the tools into one common learning system. Again, training will play an important role.

Additional time will be built into schedules for educators to plan and coordinate with each other. Work is also being done to tie together in-person and online instruction.

Communications and engagement with families will continue to play an important role. In addition to my regular weekly updates to the school community, each school principal will provide regular updates, and community administrators will hold regular town halls. Town halls will be held this summer to discuss issues related to the new school year and provide opportunities for families to provide direct feedback.

If these sound like an ambitious set of expectations, they are and they're necessary. COVID-19 continues to be a real threat to all in the communities we serve and it does not look like that will change anytime soon. We have to do the best we can to adapt to the challenges it presents.

Our goals remain the same as those I articulated back in March – help students learn, provide a safety net to students and families, and take care of all who work in schools so they can help students and families.

We'll face many challenges in the year ahead, some we can anticipate and some we cannot. Some we can solve and some we cannot. You have my unwavering commitment to do the best we can.

Thank you for your continued patience and support.